

# Increasing enrollment: the demands of a growing district

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Then and Now

Our community continues to grow and with it the school population. In the last quarter century Shrewsbury has evolved from a quiet Central Massachusetts town to a highly desirable metro-west suburb with easily accessed commuting routes to the east, west, north, and south. And it seems our society as a whole and Shrewsbury’s demographics have changed as well, with families having fewer children now than before. In 1975, school-age children accounted for 24% of the population and in 2002

dents attended school on a rotating schedule for only four days of the week. Quality suffered greatly for most students under this system. It seems hard to believe Shrewsbury has space for any more housing developments and that school enrollments will continue to climb. However, when one looks at our class sizes, grades 1-12, it becomes easier to see how we will continue to add 200+ students in each of the next five years. The number of students in each class grade 9-12 ranges from 274-343 while our elementary grades range 428-488 each. In most years, the district will experience a decrease in grade size from

other measures have been used to accommodate enrollment and retain good class sizes. Such measures included:

- Adding modular classrooms to Spring Street and Paton Schools (The district now has 23 modular classrooms attached to school buildings)
- Renting space at “Beal West” and Maxtor facilities
- Eliminating the “Primary Class”- a kindergarten/grade one class
- Splitting the eighth grade between high school and middle school
- Locating entire eighth grade at new high school until 2004
- Converting office space at Floral Street School for three additional classrooms
- Renovating the old North Shore School for use as the Parker Road Preschool. A five-classroom addition will be ready in December 2002 to increase that school’s capacity.

While we have enjoyed the new high school facility and its larger capacity, the district’s enrollment capacity will increase significantly (900-1,100 seats) by the time the old high school is renovated and re-opens in 2004. Important decisions about grade configuration for the years 2004 and beyond will be made next spring. The Coordinating Council, School Leadership Team, and School Committee are discussing several models now.

**The Future: What now?**

Enrollment projections indicate the Shrewsbury Public Schools will soon be a district with over 6,000 students. Two different projections, one from the Town Manager’s Office and the second from the New England School Development Council, both project Shrewsbury’s K-12 enrollment to surpass the 6,000 threshold in either the 2006 or 2007 school year.

It seems quite clear that an additional elementary school will be required in the not so distant future. A significant investment in the existing middle school (built in 1964) will also be needed to maintain that capital asset and bring us into the next decades of use.

Once again the School Department will engage the community in a data-driven discussion about upcoming school facility needs. We hope that this article will provide a base of ongoing communication about the facility needs and recommendations to meet these challenges. At stake is the continued quality of educational programs for our students and the reputation of the school system and community at large.

# Report card pilot

*Report card, from page 2*

foreign language) will report to parents how students are meeting standards in their subject areas. The report card will also have a section for “habits of mind” which will include standards for effort, perseverance, working to potential, etc. It will also provide sections for behavior, social-skills development, and attendance data.

For each standard, students will be reported as achieving one of five levels: exceptional achievement, commendable achievement, satisfactory achievement, progressing toward standard, and not meeting standard. A Report Card Handbook has been developed to help parents and teachers understand what learning expectations are associated with each standard and what these look like in the classroom.

A group of teachers from each elementary school has volunteered to participate in a pilot program scheduled to begin with the January 2003 reporting period. One or two teachers from each grade level (1-5) at each school will use the new report card for

**For the past two years, district personnel have been working to develop a standards-based report card for Shrewsbury students in grades three through five.**

Town and School population history			
Year	Total Population	*School Enrollment (K-12)	Students as Percent of Population
1975	21,965	5,267	24%
1985	22,181	3,881	17%
1995	25,585	3,793	15%
2002	31,640**	5,168	16%

*\*Population data as reported in annual Town Reports. Enrollment data from Department of Education October 1st reports.*  
*\*\* Federal 2000 census data.*

Grade sizes as of October 1, 2002					
Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
442	483	442	488	428	423
Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
426	395	343	330	287	274

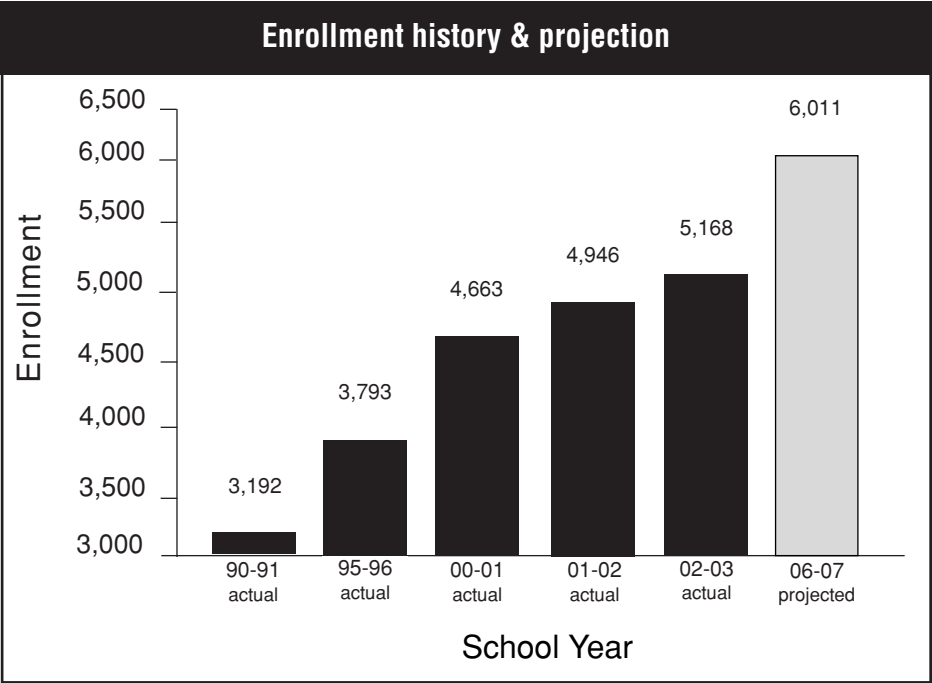
Recent Enrollment Increases		
Year	PreK-12	Net Additional Students
1996	4040	160
1997	4172	132
1998	4381	209
1999	4512	131
2000	4798	286
2001	5077	279
2002	5318	241
Net additional students 1996 to 2002		1,438

grade 8 to high school as some students go off to private schools. In the past two years that percentage was 12%. However, this school year only 6%, or half the norm, migrated to other high schools.

**Recent Strategies to Manage Enrollment**

Enrollment has risen steadily in recent years. This continues to be a pressing issue for the School Department and community to provide sufficient space, teachers, and instructional materials.

Despite the addition of Floral Street Elementary School and the new Shrewsbury High School, a variety of



it’s down to 16%.

It is important to highlight that much has changed in education within this timeframe too. Special education laws, computer technology, high stakes testing (MCAS) and Education Reform have all had an impact on the types and methods of service delivery to our students. Parents and other community members expect small class sizes and high-quality services at an affordable price.

Further, the late 1970s were marked with the infamous “Four Day Week” for high school students. Few care to recall those days when high school stu-

the remaining three reporting periods of the 2002-2003 school year.

An informational meeting for parents of students involved in the pilot program is scheduled for January 16, 2003. These parents will also be surveyed after the first report card is produced in order to get their suggestions for improvement. Additionally, all Shrewsbury parents had an opportunity to learn more about the pilot program at November and December PTO meetings at each elementary school.

Our goal for this program is to design a reporting system that reports student progress and provides parents with clearly defined, objective data based on the district's expectations for student performance. We welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively with parents and members of our educational community to ensure that the final reporting instrument reflects our needs and helps improve student learning.

## School Committee meeting dates

January	8, 22
February	12
March	5, 19
April	2, 15
May	14
June	4, 18

## Coordinating Council meeting dates

January	29
February	26